

From A 1914 Duxbury Diary

By ALISON ARNOLD

The other day I came across an old diary of mine for the year 1914. I wrote in it faithfully every day, and looking back across the years it made me realize the changes from then to now.

From June 25, until Sept. 10, 1914, I lived in the house on the corner of Surplus and Washington Streets where I now spend half the year. The diary gives a pleasant record of a summer in those days.

It was often blistering hot when the heat shimmered and locusts buzzed continually. There were cool rainy days when open fires were welcome and the roar of the surf could be heard across the bay. There were clear moonlit nights and other nights when the fog drifted in and fog horns moaned.

The Fourth of July was perfect. In the morning there was a parade along Washington St. with red, white and blue bunting decorating the floats—most of them horse-drawn. Afterwards there were games at the field and a baseball game and band concert. In the evening there was a dance at the Yacht Club and the pier was gay with Japanese lanterns.

The newspaper headlines on Aug. 5, 1914, told of the start of World War I and the diary says: "We talked nothing but war, war, war, all day." It was "a cold gray day and we had an open fire."

On the evening of Aug. 26 there was a "Women's Suffrage Meeting" at Mattakesett Hall. Those were the days when women were struggling to vote. Two days later there was a fair at Mrs. Horace Soule's to benefit St. John's

Episcopal Church. She used to play the squeaky organ at church Sundays and she made it sound like one of the best.

Familiar Faces

The Rev. Herbert Cunningham was rector then. His collie used to follow him to church and stay for the service. Faithful members of the congregation then were Mr. and Mrs. Frank Converse with Evelyn, Howard and Polly, and Mr. and Mrs. William Snow with their son, Bill, and their two little girls, Elizabeth and Eleanor. Another family group included Mr. and Mrs. F. Herbert Perkins with their three daughters, Alice, Ellen and Louise, and their son, Leprilite.

Mr. and Mrs. William Seymour also went to St. John's with their handsome son, John, and their daughter, Fanny, who was sometimes accompanied by her fiancé, Richard Field. I used to go every Sunday with my parents and tried to sit near a window so I could look out at the pine trees and sniff the pine needles, hot in the sun.

We had a Ford that summer, but we also took long walks to the Public Library, the Myles Standish monument, Peterson's Drugstore, and the golf links where forget-me-nots grew profusely in the brook and wild roses blossomed.

Town water was new in those days. Before it, we had a pump in the kitchen and tall windmills clattered. I remember when Washington St. was dug up for the water pipes and workmen ate their lunch on our lawn. Gas was not piped in until 1928.

I went to an auction on Sept. 1, 1914, in the house on Wash-

STUDYING AT M. I. T.



William Ryer, son of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Ryer of Washington St., is taking a 2-year course at M. I. T. that will lead to a B. S. in the field of electronics. He received his A.B. from Amherst College in 1952.

ington St. where the Thomas Lawsons now live. According to the diary, the house was "a mess and so dirty." But in those days ladder-back chairs went for a quarter and four-posters, for 50 cents.

Joshua Cushing, Duxbury's real estate dealer before Percy Walker took over, used to run these auctions. He was the father of Mrs. William Facey of Surplus St. and lived in the house now owned by the Herbert Kelleys on Washington St. He stored antiques in his shop which was in the house where the Oliver Barkers now live.

It was "crisp and clear" on Sept. 10, 1914, when we moved back to Brookline. The Duxbury house looked "a little bare" the night before, as "the curtains were down and the rugs, up." But we had an open fire and Charlie Hawkins, Duxbury's faithful mail-man, had brought me his annual going-away gift of a box of candy. Next summer seemed a long way off, but it was something to look forward to all through the winter. It still is.